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House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

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Representing:
Association for Career and Technical Education
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Summary of Testimony: Mr. McDaniel will testify about the importance of funding for the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. The Perkins Act provides funds to prepare youth and adults for further education and employment by building their skills for the careers of today and tomorrow. The Perkins program provides proven links to skills-building opportunities and employment outcomes for youth and adults, and addresses American employers' critical need for a skilled workforce. Perkins is among our nation's most important investments in high schools, a key component of our postsecondary and workforce development systems, and is vital to American business. The testimony will address concerns regarding the potential impacts of the Administration's proposed cuts to the Perkins program for FY 2007. ACTE urges the Committee to reject this proposal and instead increase funds for the Perkins program to help keep America competitive in the 21st century economy.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify on these important issues. I am here today as a member of the Association for Career and Technical Education. ACTE represents approximately 30,000 professionals in the career and technical education – or CTE – community, and works to promote and improve a range of education and workforce development programs. Our members are the educators who are working in schools and postsecondary institutions across the country every day to prepare America's workforce. As Rep. Regula mentioned, I am the Superintendent of the Ashland County-West Holmes Joint Vocational School District in Ohio.

Our Career Center is one of the smallest in Ohio. We service Ashland County and the western half of Holmes County – an area of about 640 square miles with a population of approximately 75,000 people. Our rural county status, along with the loss of more than 2,300 manufacturing jobs in Ashland County alone since 2001, pose significant challenges for us as a career-technical school. We must keep up with local workforce changes as well as global realities by offering programs that promote the development of core skills while preparing our students for future professions that are sometimes beyond our community's scope of imagining.

I am here today to ask for your continued support to ensure that vital resources are available to programs like mine that prepare both youth and adults for successful futures in the 21st century economy. In President Bush's announcement of the new American Competitiveness Initiative, he stated, "The bedrock of America's competitiveness is a well-educated and skilled workforce." Strong CTE programs are critical to preparing this well-educated and skilled workforce. Expanded investments in CTE are essential to meeting the goals that will help keep America competitive – and in preparing all youth and adults for full participation in lifelong learning, meaningful work, career advancement, and active citizenship.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act provides critical resources to state and local CTE programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels, with investments ensuring innovation and program improvement, as well as accountability for results. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Subcommittee for your longstanding recognition of the importance of the Perkins Act and your support as the program has faced proposed cuts in recent years. The President's FY 2007 budget request again proposes to eliminate all federal funding for Perkins programs in order to implement the expansion of the No Child Left Behind Act into high schools. Federal investments in the Perkins Act, already proven to be effective, should NOT be shortchanged to fund other initiatives.

Under this proposal, $50.4 million in federal funds would no longer be available in Ohio to support effective local career and technical education programs. My Congressional district (OH-16) would stand to lose $1.746 million in Basic State Grant funding alone. Beyond the annual federal investment in CTE, the Perkins Act's maintenance of effort and matching requirements that compel states to invest state funds to support Perkins programs would be impacted as well.

I want to spend just a few minutes sharing the impact CTE programs and funds from the Perkins Act have on my students and community.

We are a "School of Choice." This means that students from the five local school districts we serve must choose to attend our Career Center. These students may then opt to participate in one of the 19 career-technical programs that we offer. Currently, about 400 high school sophomores, juniors and seniors per year decide to attend our Career Center. Our enrollment has increased 18 percent over the past three years. Applications for next year show that this trend will continue.

Many of the students who come to us have not been successfully engaged in education in the past. While a number of our students are at-risk, a growing number are gifted and talented. Our graduation rate averages 95 percent and more than one-third of our students go on to college. I'm proud to say that the number of our students who choose to go on to college is increasing each year. Many of our students do not have college as a goal when they come to us, but we help them to develop confidence and strengthen their academic skills – and to see the very real possibility of continued education in their future. Often, our students are the first in their families to go to college. Our success can be related to our advantage as a career-technical school wherein we apply rigorous academics to a contextual career framework for our students. Our mission is to prepare our students for success in both their future world of work and postsecondary goals.

In addition, approximately 3,000 adults take advantage of updating their skills annually through our Career Center's adult education programs. Most of these adults seek to update their work skills, add credentials, and keep up with technology changes in their professions. However, about 100 adults each year, mostly displaced workers, are in full-time training for new careers. Most of these individuals are in medical or construction training programs where numerous job opportunities exist.

We are not a wealthy community. In the past three years our district has been forced to make more than a 15 percent reduction in staff for financial reasons. Along with these staff, we lost programs and support services for our students.

Without the resources provided through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, our students and our community would have even fewer options and services available at a time when they are so desperately needed. With these Perkins dollars we are able to provide hope. In spite of our financial difficulties, we have revitalized programs with new technologies. Even more importantly, we are working to launch new programs like bio-technology. It is critical that we maintain flexibility in program offerings and the services we offer our students. Your support of career-technical education and the funds from the Perkins Act truly makes a difference for our students and our community.

This is true not just in my community, but throughout the state of Ohio and around the country. As you will see below, nationally, career and technical education programs help to increase student achievement and contribute to economic development.

The Need for High Quality CTE

At all levels, CTE plays a critical role in making the U.S. workforce and the U.S. economy more competitive by supporting learning experiences that help youth and adults enter the workforce

prepared with the skills employers need. According to the 2004 National Assessment of Vocational Education, employment growth in occupations requiring a vocational associate's degree (30 percent) is projected to be more than double overall employment growth (14 percent) through 2008. CTE programs help prepare students for all 20 of the fastest growing occupations identified in the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Outlook Handbook (2006-2007 edition), and in all 14 job sectors identified by the Department of Labor's High Growth Job Training Initiative.

Nearly 75 percent of employers report severe conditions when trying to hire qualified workers, 40 percent say that applicants are poorly skilled, and 30 percent say that applicants have the wrong skills for available jobs, according to a 2002 survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Center for Workforce Preparation. The National Association of Manufacturers found similar results in the 2005 Skills Gap report, with more than 80 percent of survey respondents experiencing a shortage of qualified job candidates. In addition, the survey found that skill deficiencies are causing difficulties for manufacturers in terms of their ability to maintain production levels consistent with customer demand (56 percent), to achieve productivity targets (43 percent), and to achieve or maintain target levels of customer service and satisfaction (33 percent).

As research from the American Diploma Project shows, the skills needed for success in the workplace are often the same skills needed for success in postsecondary education. CTE programs help students gain these skills through academic and technical rigor, curriculum that is relevant to real-world application, and improved relationships.

CTE Contributes to High School Reform and Increased Academic Achievement

At the secondary level, CTE courses and instructional methodologies have a clear place in a redesigned high school environment that prepares students for the 21st century economy and ensures American competitiveness. CTE must play a key role in high school reinvention, not be replaced by it, as ACTE suggests in its new position paper – *Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century* (see Executive Summary in Addendum 1). A large number of high school reform strategies and new small schools already employ interest-based programs, as a way to increase student motivation and engagement, and over 96 percent of high school students take at least one CTE course during their high school career.

Within high schools, there should no longer be an artificial split between academic coursework and rigorous career and technical studies, nor should exposure to career- or interest-based coursework be delayed until late in high school or college. Nationally, CTE students are required by federal law to be held to the same academic standards as all other students, and the Perkins law emphasizes academic and technical integration to ensure both rigor and relevance. In 2005 an experimental study, conducted by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, found that students who received enhanced instruction of the math already present within their CTE class scored better on academic tests than those who did not get the instruction.

Students who complete a rigorous academic core coupled with a career concentration have test scores that equal or exceed "college prep" students. According to the Southern Regional

Education Board (SREB), these dual-concentrators are more likely to pursue postsecondary education, have a higher grade point average in college and are less likely to drop out in the first year. Many states that have made efforts to integrate technical and academic skills have seen dramatic results. In 2004, after a complete review and alignment of its CTE courses with state academic standards, Arizona's CTE students outperformed the general high school population on the state's high stakes AIMS test.

When students who attended a CTE "Tech Prep" program in Ohio between 1997 and 2001 were compared with a comparable group of non-Tech Prep peers, the Tech Prep students scored significantly higher on the college entrance exams, earned higher grade-point averages, and were more likely to return for a second year of study. Contrary to many long-held beliefs, students who participate in high school work-based learning activities achieve at the four-year postsecondary level as well as or better than students who do not participate in these activities.

CTE Can Help to Reduce the Dropout Rate

One of the keys to increasing students' achievement is to ensure that they complete a rigorous high school curriculum – which requires that they stay in school. A recent study by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, based in Boulder, Colorado, found that for every 100 students who start high school, only 67 earn a diploma within four years. Several recent studies have shown that CTE can help to reduce this dropout rate.

Dropping Out of High School and the Place of Career and Technical Education, an October 2005 report by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education at the University of Minnesota, examines the effect CTE course-taking has on high school dropout rates. The research found that a balance of CTE and "academic" courses was most beneficial for youth who entered high school at a normal age.

Students entering high school at a normal age (14 years or younger) had a decreased risk of dropping out of high school as they added CTE courses to their curriculum up to a point at which they were taking one CTE course for every two academic courses. Another study, completed in 1998 by the University of Michigan, reported that a quality CTE program can reduce a school's dropout rate by as much as 6 percent, and CTE students are less likely than general-track students to fail a course or to be absent.

Students appear more likely to stay in school if they can grow attached to a pathway to acceptance and success that meets their interests, so allowing students to pursue that pathway – through academic and CTE coursetaking – makes sense.

CTE Increases Future Earnings and Provides Improved Employment Outcomes

Research by John H. Bishop, an economist at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., has found that taking career and technical courses in high school beyond the introductory level predicts higher wages and earnings eight years after graduation, with the effects of vocational coursetaking slightly larger for students who get an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Other studies have found similar results. A 2002 study conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago found that a year of technically oriented coursework at a community college increased the earnings of men by 14 percent and women by 29 percent. Additionally, the study found almost no earnings increase for non-technically oriented coursework.

The 2004 National Assessment of Vocational Education found that seven years after graduating from high school, CTE students had earnings that increased by about 2 percent for each additional high school CTE course they took. Independent analysis of this data showed that students who took four high school CTE courses showed an average increase in earnings of $1,200 immediately after graduation and $1,800 seven years later.

CTE graduates are 10-15 percent more likely to be in the labor force, and earn 8-9 percent more than graduates of academic programs, according to a 2001 Russell Sage Foundation study. In addition, secondary students who graduate with a CTE concentration are 2 ½ times more likely to be employed while pursuing postsecondary education than are "college prep" students, according to SREB.

Conclusion: CTE is Necessary for American Competitiveness

Almost 97 percent of high school students take at least one CTE course, and at least one-third of all for-credit postsecondary education students – an estimated 4.9 million youths and adults – were enrolled in vocational courses and programs that lead to associate degrees and industry credentials. The breadth and depth of CTE around the country is growing to include programs in areas like biotechnology, forensics, engineering, and teacher preparation. High quality CTE programs integrate academic and technical instruction in a way that makes learning relevant to students and demonstrates how important academic and employability skills can be applied in the real world. CTE programs provide students with the skills necessary to be successful in both further education and the workplace. The research is clear – these programs are a critical component of any strategy to increase America's economic competitiveness, and must be supported at the federal level.

Addendum 1:

Reinventing the American High School for the 21st Century:
Strengthening a New Vision for the American High School through the Experiences and Resources of Career and Technical Education

Executive Summary

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), on behalf of career and technical education (CTE) professionals in the United States, advocates for clearly focusing American high schools on the goal of preparing EVERY student for full participation in a spectrum of college opportunities, meaningful work, career advancement, and active citizenship. We call upon leaders to make needed changes in school culture, instructional strategies and organizational priorities that will support this new purpose.

CTE is a major enterprise within the United States' P-16 education system. More than 95 percent of high school students take at least one CTE course during their high school career, and about one third of high school students take a concentration of three or more related CTE courses before they graduate. In addition to CTE courses offered within most of the nation's more than 16,000 typical high schools, there are approximately 1,000 regional career technology centers that offer more targeted and technology-intensive CTE programs preparing students, both young people and adults, for further education, and in some cases, for direct entry into the workforce. Further, a large number of high school reform strategies and new small schools employ interest-based programs, including CTE, as a way to increase student motivation and engagement.

Given the magnitude of the CTE enterprise, it is vital that CTE educators and leaders participate in the important discussion about how to redesign American high schools for the needs of the 21st century and bring CTE's resources and areas of expertise to that discussion.

In our discussions about high school redesign, we suggest a number of strengths and resources CTE can bring to the table for overall high school improvement. To provide clarity for the role of CTE, we suggest a three-fold purpose of career and technical education at the secondary school level. CTE should:

- **Support students in the acquisition of rigorous core knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes** needed for success in postsecondary education and the high-skilled workplace;
- **Engage students in specific career-related learning experiences that equip them to make well-informed decisions** about further education and training and employment opportunities; and,
- **Prepare students who may choose to enter the workforce directly after high school** with levels of skill and knowledge in a particular career area that will be valued in the marketplace.

In light of the current and future challenges facing our youth, the members of ACTE believe a new working model for high school is long overdue. We make the following recommendations to help guide the reinvention of the American high school:

Recommendation 1.
Establish a Clear System Goal of Career and College Readiness for All Students

All students need a strong arsenal of reading, comprehension, reasoning, problem-solving and personal skills to be ready for the world of meaningful postsecondary education and training as well as entry into the high-skilled workplace. Standards should be aligned to the demands of career and college readiness, and all students should be challenged to enroll in a rigorous college and career readiness curriculum. Extra help, including structured transition services, should be provided to support this curriculum, and opportunities for additional advancement across broad areas should be provided. Traditional academic and CTE teachers must share the goal of preparing students for both further education and careers.

Recommendation 2.
Create a Positive School Culture that Stresses Personalization in Planning and Decision-making

At a minimum, every student should be led through a process of academic and career awareness, exploration, and planning. This should include learning about the economy and career options, self-assessment for areas of interest; deeper exploration of how personal interests relate to career opportunities and gaining education and career decision-making skills; and knowledge and understanding of local, state, and national educational, occupational, and labor market opportunities, needs, and trends. Policies must be in place to ensure that career development and postsecondary planning are core activities within the high school as part of a comprehensive guidance program. Each student, and his or her parents/guardians, should develop an individualized plan for graduation and beyond that will guide the high school experience.

Recommendation 3.
Create a Positive School Culture that Stresses Personalization in Relationships

Schools remain one of the best opportunities for connecting youth and adults in positive ways, giving students the sense that they are valued and cared for, and reinforcing the message that whether they succeed or fail actually matters to someone. A system goal must be to help every youth become involved in structured activity that strengthens positive relationships with peers and adults and encourages the student's sense of confidence and belonging in school. These activities could include advisory periods, smaller learning communities, co-curricular interest-based activities—such as career and technical student organizations (CTSOs)—or other activities that provide a positive adult relationship.

Recommendation 4.
Dramatically Improve How and Where Academic Content is Taught

Teachers and researchers must work together to identify strategies that show promise for helping all students attain proficiency in high-level courses. As each state refines and clarifies its standards for career and college readiness, it should recognize that "academic" skills can be acquired in a variety of settings, not just the traditional academic classroom. The achievement problem is not just one of low-level course-taking; it is also related to unfocused curriculum and instructional methods that are not reaching all students. Integration of academic competencies into CTE curricula and of real-world content and applied methods and examples into traditional academic classes can raise student achievement levels and increase understanding of rigorous concepts. Flexibility must be in place for delivering academic content across the curriculum.

Recommendation 5.
Create Incentives for Students to Pursue the Core Curriculum in an Interest-based Context

From across the school reform spectrum, there is ample evidence that connecting rigorous academic expectations with the relevance of an interest-based curriculum can help connect students to learning in powerful ways. Interest-based areas can be organized around various broad themes, such as the fine arts, or more specific themes like biotechnology, pre-engineering, hospitality, and finance. There must be

resources and policies in place to support the development, implementation, and review of these interest-based areas.

Recommendation 6.
Support High Quality Teaching in all Content Areas

The No Child Left Behind Act creates mechanisms for assuring that every teacher in the academic core subjects is highly qualified, meaning the teacher holds a bachelor's degree or higher, grasps content at a deep level and can teach that content effectively. The crux of these standards, deep knowledge of content and skills in effective teaching methods, should apply to CTE teachers as well, including those entering the teaching profession through traditional teacher education programs and those transitioning into teaching from business and industry through alternative certification programs. CTE teachers should be able to demonstrate content mastery through a method appropriate to their areas of expertise, utilizing industry-based credentials or assessments aligned with career clusters where available. An expanded focus must be placed on professional development for all teachers in academic and technical integration and contextual teaching strategies.

Recommendation 7.
Offer Flexible Learning Opportunities to Encourage Re-entry and Completion

True quality high school reform must include effective strategies to re-engage and reconnect young people who have failed or are in danger of failing to complete high school. These young people have been failed by the current high school system. With a national graduation rate of approximately 71 percent, millions of young people are out of school and grossly ill-equipped to compete in the 21st century workforce and economy. To reform high school without a strategy to re-engage these young people who have already dropped out would be to abandon them to, and accept the social costs associated with, bleak futures marked by reduced earning potential, poverty, crime, drug abuse, and early pregnancy. High schools must provide a continuum of flexible interest-based learning opportunities that utilize effective teaching methodologies and are responsive to students' varied needs and life circumstances.

Recommendation 8.
Create System Incentives and Supports for Connection of CTE and High School Redesign Efforts

In many states and school districts, CTE leaders are providing the major impetus and resources for rethinking the instructional and organizational design of the traditional high school. However, in some locales, superintendents, school leaders and school reform advocates are reportedly overlooking the role of CTE in providing meaning, relevance, and experience in deeply contextualized learning of subject matter. This oversight will limit the effectiveness and impact of the high school redesign agenda. Policymakers at the federal, state and local levels should see academic and interest-based courses as complementary of one another, and create initiatives that support rich, interest-based programs to be built around a core of rigorous academic expectations.

Recommendation 9.
Move Beyond "Seat-Time" and Narrowly Defined Knowledge and Skills

U.S. high schools operate on a well-established set of expectations for size, time of day and seasons of the year that programs and classes are offered, how instructional material is delivered and what constitutes success in terms of the students' knowledge and skills. In order for our education system to adopt the new goal of getting every student ready for careers and college, we suggest a shift in focus to the underlying principles for what students learn and how we teach it, including what knowledge and skills are measured, how students are asked to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and how school is offered for all young people, particularly for the many students who are currently disengaged and leaving, or have already left, the traditional high school.

Clearly, we believe that CTE courses and instructional methodologies have a place in the high school environment, and that there should not be an artificial split between academic coursework and vocational studies, nor should exposure to CTE-type coursework be delayed until late in high school or college. Rather, we believe that all coursework, with clearly articulated standards and expectations, can help build within students the mix of skills, aptitudes and attitudes they will need for success after high school. Designing American high schools around the needs of students in the present and the future requires honesty, courage, and a willingness to change familiar structures and practices in the best interests of our young people. Real change, made for the right reasons and toward the right mission, will yield dramatically better results and a more hopeful future for America's young people and for our national economic and cultural well-being.